



DelDOT Public Relations

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## Revamped Roadway Sign Law Institutes \$25 Fine DelDOT Begins Enforcement Nov. 1

- *Special Note: Media interested in a ride-along with enforcement staff may contact Public Relations*

**Dover** – On November 1, the Department of Transportation (DelDOT) will begin to enforce a revamped state law intended to limit sign pollution along state roadways. DelDOT's goal is simple: Keep the Rights-of-Way (ROW) and utility poles clear of illegal signs, which contribute to litter and can be a safety hazard.

While the current "Clear Zone" law already prohibits all non-official signage placed in medians and close to the shoulders of state roads and highways, the new version approved by the General Assembly in June 2005 adds some much-needed teeth by subjecting the sign owner to a \$25 per sign fine and a \$15 per sign recovery fee.

The older Clear Zone legislation has had some beneficial effects, but despite it, Delaware has seen a continuing increase in the number of signs placed illegally on utility poles and elsewhere within the state's Right-of-Way. Last year alone, DelDOT spent more than \$400,000 to collect and dispose of more than 36,000 illegal signs.

The following changes to the state sign law are as follows:

- DelDOT may now immediately remove any illegal sign on a utility pole or anywhere else in the state's Rights-of-Way.
- The older Clear Zone law authorized DelDOT to patrol only those sections of state maintained roads outside municipal boundaries. The new law removes that restriction and requires us to use the same diligence everywhere in the state.
- The owners of illegal signs removed by the state are now subject to a **\$25 per sign fine**. Those breaking the law will receive a violation notice. DelDOT will have digital photographic evidence, showing date and place of the infraction, to support its fines. Two person crews from the state will be used to prevent any claim of non-objective enforcement. Owners who want their signs back will have to pay a \$15 per sign recovery fee.
- Candidates for public office, and all other sign owners, will be granted permission to place signs outside the Clear Zone, but still within the right-of-way, for 30 days prior to, and after, an election. All sign owners may only place their messages throughout the jurisdiction for which the election is being held. For example, if there is a statewide election underway, the entire network of road Rights-of-Way becomes eligible for this exclusion. Otherwise, the smaller territory (Senate, House, Council etc.) will prevail.

"We expect that the owners of these illegal signs will get the message that all Delawareans will no longer tolerate sign pollution along our roadways," said DelDOT Secretary Nathan Hayward III. "The end result will be less roadside pollution and an eventual reduction in the need for enforcement, which will in turn allow DelDOT crews to focus on other priorities."

To help get the message out statewide, DelDOT has sent out thousands of mailings to a variety of businesses, local governments, elected officials, civic organizations, state agencies and utility companies.

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